

Message Text

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65-60

ACTION L-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 CU-02 SCA-01 AID-05

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-07 PA-01

PRS-01 USIA-06 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 H-01 MMS-01

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R 061207Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 518

USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR US DEL TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PORG, IR

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

REF: STATE 12320, STATE 14917, STATE 34811, AND STATE A-1045 OF
FEB 14

1. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF AIRGRAM PREPARED IN REPLY TO REFERENCES.

2. 2500 YEARS AGO, PERSIAN EMPIRE SET NEW STANDARDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR CONQUERED PEOPLES AND MINORITIES. TODAY IRAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY HARKS BACK TO GLORY AND POWER OF THAT ERA, BUT WORLD'S EXPECTATIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD ARE HIGHER AND IRAN IS NO LONGER LEADER IN THAT FIELD. IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXT, HOWEVER, NEITHER IS IT PARTICULARLY HARSH. EXPECTATIONS WITHIN IRAN ARE NOT AS HIGH AS THOSE IN WEST BECAUSE IRANIANS ARE SOCIALIZED AT EARLY AGE TO ACCOMMODATE TO POWER REALITIES. THEIR RELIGION TEACHES THEM TO ACCEPT SITUATIONS THEY CANNOT HOPE TO CHANGE. THEY GENERALLY RESPECT STRONG HAND AT HELM, AND ARE NOT PRONE TO CHALLENGE SYSTEM BY STANDING ON MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE AND DEMANDING

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THEIR RIGHTS WHERE RISKS ARE INVOLVED.

3. IN ASSESSING PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN, WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO PROJECT OUR OWN VALUES DIRECTLY ONTO THE IRANIAN SCENE. FOR EXAMPLE, MANY IRANIANS VIEW WESTERN SOCIETY AS TOO PERMISSIVE. DEGREE OF OUTRIGHT RESTRICTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN IS QUITE LIMITED, FOR IRANIAN CONSTITUTION PROTECTS BASIC RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS OCCUR MAINLY THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO UNDERSTOOD LIMITS AS TO WHAT ACTIONS ARE PERMISSIBLE. INCONSISTENT AS IT MAY SEEM, IRANIANS EXPECT HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE MORE CAREFULLY PROTECTED IN WESTERN COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY UNITED STATES, THEN IN IRAN, AND THEY ARE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF OUR SHORTCOMINGS IN TREATMENT OF INDIANS, BLACKS, AND OTHER MINORITY GROUPS.

4. UNDER IRANIAN CRIMINAL LAW, ACTIONS AGAINST SECURITY OF STATE ARE DEALT WITH FIRMLY. DEATH PENALTY IS NORMALLY ASSESSED AGAINST THOSE WHO CAUSE DEATH OR DESTRUCTION OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY. SINCE 1953, SUCH CASES INVOLVING CRIMINAL ACTIONS ARE HANDLED BY MILITARY TRIBUNALS IN CLOSED SESSION, WHEREAS CASES INVOLVING ONLY INTENT ARE OFTEN TRIED IN PUBLIC. PUBLISHED ESTIMATES OF TOTAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN IRAN ARE PROBABLY OFF BY FACTOR OF TEN, ALTHOUGH NUMBERS VARY AT ANY GIVEN TIME AS DETAINEES ARE HELD FOR QUESTIONING AND MANY EVENTUALLY RELEASED WITHOUT TRIAL.

5. IRANIAN BILL OF RIGHTS IS CONTAINED IN ARTICLES EIGHT THROUGH TWENTY-FIVE OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY LAW OF IRANIAN CONSTITUTION (1907). ITS PROVISIONS COVER MOST OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, ALTHOUGH DISTINCTIONS SUCH AS RACE, COLOR, AND SEX ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED -- CONSTITUTION STATES ONLY THAT ALL ARE EQUAL BEFORE LAW. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN IRAN IS RESTRICTED ONLY AS RESULT OF LEGAL ACTION. IRANIAN WOMEN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GO ABROAD WITHOUT THEIR HUSBANDS' WRITTEN PERMISSION. FREEDOM OF RELIGION EXISTS FOR ALL EXCEPT BAHAI'S WHO ARE CONSIDERED HERETICAL BECAUSE THEIR RELIGION IS DERIVED CHIEFLY FROM ISLAM. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES ARE RESTRICTED BECAUSE SHI'A ISLAM IS STATE RELIGION. OVERT LIMITATIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ARE FEW; CENSORSHIP IS LARGELY SELF-IMPOSED AS IRANIANS ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO WHAT IS PERMISSIBLE IN THEIR SOCIETY. SECURITY ORGANIZATION, SAVAK, "EYES AND EARS OF KING", HAS EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF INFORMERS TO REPORT ACTIVITIES AND EXPRESSIONS OF OPINION CONTRARY TO GOVERNMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLICY. RIGHTS OF WORKERS AND GENERAL RIGHT TO RECEIVE FREE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION HAVE BEEN ADDED TO IRANIAN CONSTITUTION BY REFORMS CONTAINED IN TWELVE POINTS OF SHAH-PEOPLE REVOLUTION (TEHRAN A-31).

HELMS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TEHRAN02168
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750079-0354
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750374/aaaacpaw.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION L
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 12320, 75 STATE 14917, 75 STATE 34811, 75 AND STATE A-1045
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUN 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <30 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PORG, IR
To: STATE GENEVA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006